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accesses bulletin board server 2 from cellular phone 6b, designates message 4 and downloads the data. A password is requested as the authentication information. Addressee P2 can read the message with his/her own cellular phone 6b. The same applies to message 5, but message 5 does not include the addressee. It is left to the user whether or not to receive the message. Anyone who thinks he/she is the intended addressee inputs his/her own name as the password. If the person was intended by the sender to receive the message, the person can read message 5.

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In addition to the message communication from a specific sender to a specific receiver, message communication to the general public is also possible. Public area 101 is used for this purpose. If the message is a simple one, the user can read it without any operation. If the message is long, it is difficult to display all of it due to limited display area space. Therefore, desirably only the title and outline are displayed as an icon message, and interested people will access the icon message and download the additional information to his/her own cellular phone.

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Fig. 4 is a view explaining the procedure of accessing the electronic bulletin board system relating to an embodiment of the present invention. This electronic bulletin board is placed on the street. The user (receiver) confirms the displayed bulletin board on the site and downloads the necessary message. To do so, the user is required to access bulletin board server 2a. One way is to directly type the address and another is to automatically access the most preferred bulletin board according to the zone of the user's cellular phone. The second access method will be described in detail below. The area (zone) covered by the radio base station site of the cellular phone has a certain size. If one electronic bulletin board is located in one zone, one zone corresponds to one bulletin board. This relationship is stored in advance in a database 17, and when a cellular phone makes an access request for an electronic bulletin board, central

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server 1 selects the most preferred electronic bulletin board (the one which is before the user) according to the zone of the cellular phone (i.e., the identification number of the radio base station site), and gives the address to the cellular phone.

5 By accessing the electronic bulletin board based on this address, the cellular phone can download data from the most preferred electronic bulletin board. In the example in Fig. 4, cellular phone 6a first accesses central server 1. Then, it accesses bulletin board server 2a within the same zone using the address
10 or instruction from central server 1. Similarly, cellular phone 6b accesses bulletin board server 2b in the same zone. However, cellular phone 6c can access neither of the bulletin board servers 2a, 2b because there is no bulletin board server in the same zone.

15 Fig. 5 is a view explaining another procedure of using the electronic bulletin board system relating to an embodiment of the present invention. In Fig. 3, the cellular phone was used to leave or download messages. In Fig. 5, input portion 26 of
20 the electronic bulletin board was used to generate, write and read messages. When a message is read, the message contents are displayed on display portion 24 (cf. example of message 5 in Fig. 5). Furthermore, in addition to display portion 24, a small display portion may be provided in the vicinity of input portion
25 26 to display the message contents. Thereby, it is possible to convey the message contents only to the user.

Fig. 6 outlines the message exchange between servers 1, 2 and mobile information terminals a, b. A message is prepared
30 by mobile information terminal 6a (S1). The message is transmitted to bulletin board server 2 (S2). Message board server 2 displays the received message as is or converted into an icon message (S4). At the same time, bulletin board server 2 transmits the received message to central server 1.

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When the receiver desires to download a message onto mobile

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information terminal 6b, a message transmission request is first sent from mobile information terminal 6b to bulletin board sever 2 (S5). Message board server 2 authenticates such request (S6). Authentication is done by collation with a pre-input password, telephone number of the cellular phone, name, etc. If the user is an authorized user, bulletin board server 2 transmits the message to mobile information terminal 6b (S7). Mobile information terminal 6b displays the message (S8). If the receiver returns a message, mobile information terminal 6b transmits a return message to bulletin board server 2 (S9). The return message is displayed on the bulletin board (S10) and at the same time transferred to central server 1 (S11).

Processing steps S1 to S4 and S5 to S11 are executed after mobile information terminals 6a, 6b have established access to bulletin board server 2. Now, the process of establishing access will be described below. Mobile information terminal 6a makes an inquiry to central server 1 for the URL of bulletin board server 2 within the zone (S12). As there is normally one central server 1, the user always accesses the same URL at S12 irrespective of which bulletin board the user is standing before. The URL of central server 1 is preset. It can also be acquired from a search engine. Upon receiving the inquiry for the URL, central server 1 retrieves the bulletin board server 2 within the zone of mobile information terminal 6a (S13). During the inquiry in S12, the service company of the mobile information terminal (cellular phone) transmits, together with the user's request, the identification number of the radio base station site which the mobile information terminal is currently communicating with. Central server 1 extracts bulletin board server 2 within the zone of such radio base station site using such identification number as the retrieval key, and acquires the URL of such server. Normally, one bulletin board server 2 exists within a zone. If there is a plurality of bulletin board servers 2 within a zone, one is selected. In such case, the plurality of bulletin board servers 2 are desirably linked to each other. For example, the